

10 Group dynamics

Group dynamics exercises develop group cohesiveness and problem-solving skills, and encourage collaboration and creativity. These activities generally begin with an introduction by the facilitator who sets up a problem or challenge for the group to solve. Some are physical and active, while others are brain teasers. The exercises should be fun while providing experience of using teamwork to solve specific problems. A few ideas of some group dynamic exercises that have been used successfully are described below.

10.1 *Wayward whispers*

Objective: To raise awareness about communication processes, especially about how messages can become distorted and to demonstrate how communication can be made more effective.

Duration: 10 mins

Steps:

- a) The participants form two groups by in turn calling out the numbers 1 and 2
- b) Each group (e.g. 1 and 2) lines up
- c) One representative from each group goes to quietly receive a message from the facilitator (the facilitator is allowed to say the message only once)
- d) The representative returns to their group and whispers the message they got from the facilitator to their immediate neighbour in the line they have formed. They may say it only once. That individual then whispers the message to the next person in the line and so on, until the message reaches the last person in the line.
- e) When the message has reached the last person in the line, that person delivers the message back to the facilitator. When both groups have finished, the facilitator asks the last people in both the lines to reveal the messages they heard and then the facilitator tells the whole group the original message.

Discussion: How does the message change when it is conveyed from one person to another? What were the weaknesses of the message itself hampering correct transfer? What were the weaknesses of the people transferring the message? How can we communicate in a better, more effective way?

Source: Collection of Games and Group Dynamics Simulations, Indonesia National IPM Program

10.2 *Counting 10 strides between stool and start position*

Objective: To raise awareness about working together and communicating with each other.

Materials: Cloth to tie over the eyes

Steps:

- a) Tie a cloth over the eyes so the participant can't see. Ask the participant to walk from a set starting position to a stool and hit it with a stick.
- b) Let all participants have a go.

Discussion: Why can't we do simple things with our eyes covered? How could we have managed to do this task? What are the lessons we learn from this.

10.3 Leading the blind

Objectives:

- To have the participants experience how it feels to be 'blind', or to lack knowledge of some aspects of what is happening
- To raise awareness about the feelings and needs of people who may need assistance
- To enhance understanding about the requirements for being a good facilitator

Materials: Cloths to tie across the eyes, preferably dark coloured so light doesn't pass through.

Duration: 15 minutes

Steps:

- a) Ask the participants to get themselves into pairs, and then to tie the cloth around the eyes of one person in each pair, so that they cannot see anything.
- b) The person who is not blindfolded then leads the blindfolded person around for ~5 mins.

Discussion:

How did the blindfolded people feel when they could not see? How did you feel about the person who was leading you around? Did you trust him/her? Why or why not? Did you feel that your guide cared for you or that s/he made a fool of you? Why?

How did the 'guides' feel leading a blind person? What special efforts did they make to lead their partner? Did they search for easy or difficult things for their partner to experience? Did they give him/her their full attention? Did you supervise him/ her tightly or let him/her act freely? Did you explain each situation beforehand?

From the answers given during the discussion above, some general conclusions can be drawn regarding leadership and facilitation, e.g:

A good facilitator

1. Does not leave his/ her group to their own devices
2. Does not force others into his/her own plans
3. Gives sensible and timely explanations, does not threaten others, but does not hide constraints either
4. Acts in accordance with the capabilities and emotions of the group s/he is facilitating
5. Delegates those tasks and responsibilities that can be accomplished by other members of the group

Source: Collection of Games and Group Dynamics Simulations, Indonesia National IPM Program

10.4 Collector's items

Objective: To raise awareness about the importance of planning, collaboration and creativity when doing a collective assignment

Materials:

Six sheets of A4 with a list of items to be collected listed on them:

Example list:

- an old plastic bag
- a weevil-infested sweetpotato root
- a hat
- a woman's shoe
- a sweetpotato leaf with potassium deficiency symptoms

- a handful of healthy soil
- leaves from four different types of plants
- a map of the village
- a brush

Duration: 10 minutes

Steps:

- Ask the participants to divide themselves up into teams of equal size (approx 5-6 per team).
- Explain to them that each team will be given a list of items to be collected, and they will compete to see which team can collect them and bring them back to the meeting place first. They have a maximum of 10 minutes.
- Handout the lists to each team, and then start timing.
- After all groups have finished, check the items that were collected and give points for correct items. Extra points should be given for creativity. The group with the most points for speed, completeness and creativity is the winner.

Discussion: What strategies did the groups apply to divide tasks and collect the items? What worked well and what did not? What can we learn from this exercise?

Source: South East Asia, Farmer Field Schools for Integrated Crop Management of Sweetpotato

10.5 Follow me

Objective: To relax and have fun

Duration: 5 minutes

Steps:

- The facilitator asks the participants to stand up and imitate all his/her movements
- The facilitator then extends arms forward and begins clapping hands, first slowly then increasing speed until everyone claps mechanically. Then suddenly stop. Notice how many participants continue to clap. Repeat the exercise with the facilitator choosing a different activity for the participants to follow.

Discussion: Why do some people continue to clap when the person they are imitating has stopped? Why can't they imitate exactly? What can we learn from this exercise?

Source: Collection of Games and Group Dynamics Simulations, Indonesia National IPM Program

10.6 Nine dots

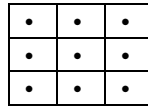
Objective: To raise awareness about creativity and the conditions that favour and constrain it.

Materials: Flip chart sheet, marker pen, A4 sheets of paper or participants notebooks, and pencils

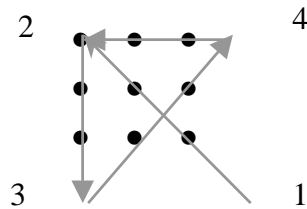
Duration: 5 minutes

Steps:

- a) Draw nine dots on a flip chart sheet as shown:



- b) Ask the participants to work individually to figure out how to connect all nine dots using only four lines and without lifting the pen off the paper.
c) Ask a couple of participants to work together on the problem at the front on the group on a flip chart.
d) If no one can solve the problem, show them how to do it.



Discussion: Why didn't they manage to solve the problem themselves? Why was their effort limited to the square formed by the dots and did they not dare to go 'beyond the borders'? What restricted their creativity? Conclude that for creativity to flourish people must dare to go beyond their habits, should not feel restricted and need a supportive, judgement-free environment.

10.7 How many squares?

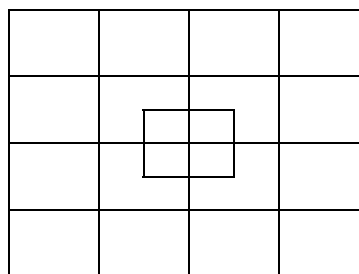
Objective: To raise awareness about the importance of considering the perceptions and opinions of other people

Materials: Flip-chart sheet, marker pen

Duration: 5 minutes

Steps:

- a) Draw a large square on the flipchart sheet. Divide the square into smaller squares as shown.



- b) Ask the participants to count the total number of squares. List the various answers on the flipchart.
c) The answers are likely to differ, since some people may overlook some squares. The correct answer is 35.

Discussion: Why do the answers differ between people? What does this game teach us about the perceptions of other people?

Source: *Collection of Games and Group Dynamics Simulations, Indonesia National IPM Program*

10.8 Line up

Objectives: To acquaint the participants with one another with regard to both physical and personal characteristics. To exercise group collaboration

Duration: 10 minutes

Steps:

- a) Ask the participants to form two even groups (make sure they have the same number of people in both groups).
- b) The facilitator then explains the rules of the game and checks to make sure that everyone understand them. The procedure is as follows:
- c) The two groups will compete to see which can line up fastest according to personal or physical characteristics following the instructions of the facilitator.
- d) After naming the characteristic and giving instructions for how to form the line (e.g. if the characteristic is height: line up from shortest to tallest), the facilitator will slowly count to 10. If a group finishes forming the line before the facilitator reaches 10, the participants in that group should all raise their hands.
- e) The facilitator will then check whether each groups sequence is correct.
- f) The group that lined up fastest and with the fewest errors is the winner.

Discussion: What was difficult about this activity? How could we have done it more easily?

Source: Collection of Games and Group Dynamics Simulations, Indonesia National IPM Program

10.9 Know yourself

Objective: To demonstrate how poorly we observe the details of things we often see.

Duration: 5 minutes

Steps:

- a) Ask the participants to get into pairs.
- b) Ask one member of each pair to close his or her eyes. The person with their eyes closed must then tell the other person in as much detail as possible what s/he him/herself is wearing (colours, pictures or writing on T-shirts, dresses, kangas etc, holes etc). The one who is looking may probe for details. When they finish the observer gives a score between 0-10, then together they evaluate the exercise, what was lacking, why was it difficult etc?
- c) Then the roles are exchanged and the previous observer closes his/her eyes and tells his/her partner in detail what s/he has in her/his pockets or handbag (without feeling). The observer may probe for details. When finished, s/he has to show the content of her/his pockets to check whether the description was correct. The observer gives a score between 0-10, and together they evaluate the exercise.

Discussion: As a whole group, what did the participants learn from this exercise? To what extent could we give details of our own clothes/ pocket contents? Why aren't we more observant? How can we increase our observation skills?

Source: Participatory Learning & Action. A Trainer's Guide IIED, London

10.10 Pull each other

Steps:

- a) Pair up into twos and follow these instructions:
 - Grip each others hands then pull

Interpretation:

- Demonstrates the need to strengthen cohesiveness or the spirit of solidarity to forge ahead
- Those who have lagged behind in the learning process should be pulled forward rather than leaving them behind and even those who drop out should be pulled back in.

10.11 Crashing Plane

The pilot announces that the plane has a problem and each passenger should fasten their seat belts

Instructions:

- Group up in threes – those alone are to be crushed
- Then group up in fours – those alone are to be crushed
- Then group up in threes again – those alone are to be crushed
- Then group in twos – those alone are to be crushed
- Then the facilitator who is the pilot asks those who were not part of a group how they felt

Answers might include:

- Out of place and ashamed
- Felt a problem to remain alone or isolated
- Likened to an aborted marriage

Interpretation:

- Should not come late and miss lessons
- Everybody's presence in the school and contribution is important